

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT

By ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE.

IN Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the Englishman who is due to arrive in this country to-morrow for the purpose of lecturing, we have not even the mildest of interest. Without meaning to be personally ungracious, we should have been just as well pleased if he had remained at Undershaw, Hindhead, Surrey, or at the Athenæum Club. In the Dr. Conan Doyle, who about the year 1890 was writing some exceedingly clever detective stories that introduced a character that has become the most widely known throughout the world of any character in all the history of fiction, we have an interest that it would be foolish to deny. But that aspect of the man is already familiar. There is, however, a third Arthur Conan Doyle, who is a literary workman of the first order, whose high talent has never been adequately recognized and who is, comparatively speaking, unknown to a great part of the American reading public. In him we have a very decided interest.

OF course you know Mr. Sherlock Holmes from "The Study in Scarlet" and "The Sign of the Four" through "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," and "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes," and "The Return of Sherlock Holmes," and "The Hound of the Baskervilles," down to "The Valley of Fear" and "His Last Bow." Probably you know also something of "The White Company," and "Sir Nigel," and "Micah Clark," and "The Refugees," and "Rodney Stone," and "The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard," and "The Lost World," and "The Poison Belt." But do you know "The Doings of Raffles Haw," and "Beyond the City," and "Uncle Bernac," and "The Great Shadow," and, above all, "Through the Magic Door," one of the most stimulating and entertaining books of literary essays that has appeared in a generation? In many respects, the best work of Conan Doyle is to be found in the little known books.

IN "Through the Magic Door" Conan Doyle expressed the opinion that Macaulay could have written a great historical novel for the reason that he was a great transmuter. Doyle himself possesses the gift of transmutation probably to a higher degree than any other writing man of our time. "Rodney Stone," for example, has been called the "best novel of the prize ring ever written." It is that, and it is more than that. It is as vivid and illuminating a picture of Corinthian England, the England of the first decade of the last century, with its excesses, its mad eccentricities and its heroisms as fiction has to offer. Analyzed, "Rodney Stone" is found to be made up in great part of the various "Lives" of Beau Brummell, of "Tom and Jerry," and of "Pugilistica" and Pierce Egan's "Boxiana" and other works of the British prize ring, with their vivid jests and stupid jargon. A man of high talent took these baser metals, and in his magic alembic, transformed them into a narrative of the first order.

TO use Doyle's own words, "for 'The White Company' and 'Sir Nigel' he 'tore the heart out of Froissart.'" From much reading of the American historian Parkman he drew the material from which he wrote the last half of "The Refugees," Greysolon de Lhut, the leader of the *coureurs de bois*, and Father Jogues were actual persons of that heroic iron age, when the white settlers of the Lake Champlain region lived under the constant menace of the terrible Iroquois vengeance. If you will read in "Through the Magic Door" the chapters in which Conan Doyle tells of the books in his library which deal with the great Napoleon and the "men with the hairy knapsacks" and the hearts of steel whose tramp shook the Continent for so many years" you will find the direct in-

spiration of "The Great Shadow," "Uncle Bernac" and the "Exploits" and "Adventures" of Brigadier Gerard. Sherlock Holmes is the character that will probably always be associated with the name of Conan Doyle. Etienne Gerard has ever been closer to his heart.

UNDER another name Gerard first appeared in a fugitive story, "A Romance of the Foreign Office," that is included in the volume "The Green Flag." That was a tale properly belonging in the "Exploits" or the "Adventures," just as "The Lost Special" of the "Round the Fire" stories should have been linked with the name of Sherlock Holmes. Of all the virile characters of Doyle's fiction—Sir Arthur has never succeeded in drawing a woman, save perhaps the strong minded heroine of "Beyond the City," who is much more than a marionette—Etienne Gerard is the most lovable, human and many sided. We meet him as a *vieux grognard* of the First Empire, sipping his wine at the cafe, taking delight in the telling and retelling of tales of his lusty and glorious youth. In these tales "L'Epopée," as the French call it, passes before us, and in them we have sound and generous philosophy. Once the Brigadier deplores national boasting. He has fought in Spain, Russia, Germany, Italy, everywhere, and he has found that one nation is as brave as another. "Except," he adds with a gorgeous burst of Gascon naivete, "that the French have rather more courage than the rest."

TO say that in the veins of Conan Doyle are commingled the three bloods that flowed at the Battle of the Boyne is far from being a mere rhetorical flourish. It explains what might be termed his British point of view, his Irish point of view and his French point of view. Most of his English heroes are Irish. A third of his heroic figures are Frenchmen. The fighting Britons of his fiction of the Napoleonic wars are loud in expressing their detestation of the French, but they are generous in their tributes to French valor and quick to explain that the lack of French success upon the seas was directly due to limited opportunities for learning seamanship, and the absence of trained officers is a result of the Revolution. Occasionally he has used the United States as a background, and on the whole Americans have no cause to complain that he has been uncompromising in his treatment of the republic and its citizens.

OF course, Conan Doyle makes some of his American characters talk as Americans never do talk. But then he is British, so nothing more on that point need be said. Certainly no American in his fiction ever talked so preposterously as does the Wilton Sargent of Mr. Kipling's "An Error in the Fourth Dimension." In "The Lost World" Doyle suggests that a character courting personal danger don a suit of "American football armor." That dig was quite pardonable for the reason that Dr. Doyle was a spectator at the football game between Princeton and Pennsylvania at Trenton in 1894. In one of the early Sherlock Holmes stories, "The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor," there was what may be termed a "yawp" in typical Fourth of July orator vein about the greatness and grandeur of Columbia, gem of the ocean. An American paragrapher at the time was unkind enough to suggest that Dr. Doyle was probably paving the way for his then projected American visit.

ILLUSION has been made to Sherlock Holmes as the most widely known character in all the history of fiction. He is so much that that there is no second. In comparison Robinson Crusoe, Sinbad the Sailor, Don Quixote and

Bluebeard are obscure creations. More Frenchmen are acquainted with him than with *Barbe Bleue*; more Arabs than with Sinbad; more Spaniards than with the Knight of La Mancha. In Barcelona there is a literary factory devoted to the turning out of Sherlock Holmes (or Olmes) romances by the millions of copies for Spain and the Spanish reading lands of the Caribbean and Central and South America. An Iberian Sherlock Holmes, bearing very little resemblance to the Doyle character, is the hero of such titles as "Sherlock Holmes and the Poisoners of Chicago," "Sherlock Holmes Among the Opium Smugglers," "Sherlock Holmes and the Assassins of Vienna," "Sherlock Holmes and the Ship of Death."

THE origin of Sherlock Holmes is an old story, but it may be recalled briefly here on account of a certain timeliness. The character was drawn from Joseph Bell, who was one of Doyle's professors when the latter was an undergraduate at a Scottish university. Bell's hobbies were observation and deduction. He would bring a stranger before his class and ask the class to apply observation and deduction and tell what the man's lifelong occupation had been. He himself would swiftly say: "This man has been a stonemason," and then point a certain disfigurement in the man's hands that had been the result of his work in that calling. After leaving the university and going to the Arctic on a whaling ship, Doyle settled down to some lean years as a medical practitioner. That part of his life is reflected in "The Stark Munro Letters." In unoccupied hours, and he had many, he began to write, first such tales as "My Friend the Murderer" and "The Parson of Jackman's Gulch." Then the memory of Prof. Bell came to him, and out of that and odds and ends of suggestion drawn from Poe's Dupin and Gaboriau's Lecoq and Pere Tabaret he invented Sherlock Holmes. The first Sherlock Holmes story was "A Study in Scarlet," a narrative of about 30,000 words. It was repeatedly rejected, but eventually the author succeeded in selling it outright to an obscure publication for £25. Twenty years later very much inferior Sherlock Holmes stories were bringing him, from all sources, approximately \$2 a word.

HERE is a Doyle story that will probably be retold elsewhere than in THE HERALD book section. Just before he left for England after his lecturing tour here in 1894 the Aldine Club of New York gave him a dinner. In his speech he told how, arriving in Boston, the cabman refused to accept any fare, but asked for a ticket to the reading. Dr. Doyle, surprised at the recognition, said: "Tell me how you found out who I am and you shall have tickets for the whole family and such cigars as you smoke in America besides." Whereupon the cabman answered:

"If you will excuse personal remarks, your coat lapels are badly twisted downward, where they have been grasped by the pertinacious New York reporters. Your hair has the Quakerish cut of a Philadelphia barber, and your hat, battered at the brim in front, shows where you have tightly grasped it in the struggle to stand your ground at a Chicago literary luncheon. Your right overshoe has a large block of Buffalo mud under the instep; the odor of a Utica cigar hangs about your clothing, and the overcoat itself shows the slovenly brushing of the porters of the through sleeper from Albany. The crumbs of a doughnut on the top of your bag—pardon me, your luggage—could only have come there in Springfield; and stenciled upon the very end of the 'Wellington,' in fairly plain lettering, is the name 'Conan Doyle!'"

HERE is a Doyle story that we are fairly certain will not have been told. It is probably more veracious than the other, and deals with a prophecy that was made about Conan Doyle when he left school. His teacher must have been one of those noble old Romans such

as Thackeray described as roaring at Pendennis, when, after the death of Pendennis's father, his uncle, the Major, called to take the boy home. When Doyle had finish his course at school the headmaster called him aside and, after eyeing him with ominous disfavor, spoke to him in measured tones as follows: "Doyle, I have known you now for seven years, and I know you thoroughly. I am going to say something which you will remember in after life. Doyle, you will never come to any good."

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE was made a knight in 1902, not because he was a writer of highly entertaining fiction, but because of his defense of the British policy in South Africa during the Boer war. At the time an enthusiastic American admirer of Doyle wrote: "We have never until now experienced any desire to be King of England, but we are beginning to see that there are possibilities in the kingship which we had not recognized before. If, for instance, we were occupying the English throne we should cause it to be intimated to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that he might become a baronet as soon as he should write 'The Adventure of the Second Stain,' which he has so exasperatingly mentioned in one of his other tales, and which seems to us one of the most piquant, mysterious and tantalizing titles that any one ever invented. We should also cause it to be understood that a story as good as 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' would gain for its author the rank of baron; a story as good as 'The Sign of the Four,' a title of viscount, and one as good as 'A Study in Scarlet' the title of earl. A book like the 'Memoirs' would deserve a marquise; and if it is conceivable that any one could again produce so fascinating a volume as the 'Adventures' it is perfectly obvious that such a person ought to be a duke."

Authors' Works And Their Ways

The Century Company will publish in this country a novel which has made a curious publishing history in England, the first edition of ten thousand copies having been exhausted in a week, according to a cable dispatch received from London. The book, "The Love Story of Alette Brunton," is by Gilbert Frankau (a son of "Frank Danby"), the author of "Tid'apa," "The Judgment of Valhalla," &c. It is said to be based, like Clemence Dane's play "A Bill of Divorcement," upon the divorce question.

A book of memoirs written by the ex-Crown Prince of Germany is to be published in the United States by Charles Scribner's Sons early in May, and is simultaneously to appear in England, France, Germany and other countries. The book has been written by the ex-Crown Prince's own hand during his exile in Holland. It describes his home and school life, his military training, his experiences at court and his visits to foreign royalties, among them Queen Victoria, the Czar, Abdul Hamid of Turkey, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and King Edward of England. He expresses a very high opinion of the latter both as ruler and man. Part of the book is devoted to the part the ex-Crown Prince played in the war, particularly in connection with the Verdun drive.

Frank Tannenbaum, author of "Wall Shadows," a book about American prisons, reviewed in last week's book section, is leaving for Mexico shortly to make a thoroughgoing study of prison and labor conditions there.

Jackson Gregory, whose latest novel "The Everlasting Whisper" is listed by the April issue of *Books of the Month* as the twelfth "best seller" in the United States, declares that he wrote his first book in a tent on top of the Sierra Nevada and had it accepted by two publishers. Before he became a writer Gregory's varied career included serving as a deckhand on a West Indies sugar vessel, newspaper reporting in New York and San Francisco, digging and panning

for gold, punching cattle—"quite gently," he insists—and teaching school.

A new book by Dr. Walter E. Traprock, author of "The Cruise of the Kawa," will be published by Putnam's early in the autumn. It will deal with another Kawa cruise, this time to the frozen North. The explorer rather expects to reach the Pole—in his book. The new volume will be similar in format to the famous South Sea burlesque, the sales of which, the publishers announce, already have passed the 40,000 mark.

Gascony is the setting of the novel "Abbe Pierre," by Jay William Hudson, which D. Appleton & Co. are to publish this month. Such Gascons at D'Artagnan and Cyrano have made the world familiar with the Gascon temperament as displayed in their picturesque swagger through the pages of Dumas and Rostand. The beauties of the Gascon landscape form a setting for "Abbe Pierre." The central character, Abbe Pierre himself, speaks of "my garden house, which looks out not only on the church tower but over the red tiled roofs of my village to the most wonderful country the eyes of man ever saw—ending with the distant Pyrenees, on whose towering summits the snow gleams against the sky, even though it is the last of May, and the roses are in bloom."

The caravan, that houseboat on wheels propelled by horse power, is as yet an unfamiliar sight along our country back roads. In England, however, every year sees more people gypsying. Mr. Alexander in his forthcoming book, "A Wayfarer's Caravan," to be issued by the Cornhill Publishing Company, describes a journey by road from the east coast of England to the west coast of Ireland.

Travel in 1775 was not so easy as it is to-day, especially for "a lady of quality." An account of the early methods of travel appears in the "Journal of a Lady of Quality," edited by Evangeline Walker Andrews in collaboration with Prof. Charles M. Andrews, published by the Yale University Press. It is the narrative of a journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina and Portugal in the years 1774 to 1776.

William Lindsey, whose novel, "The Backsliders," was reviewed in a recent issue of THE HERALD book section, was highly successful in business before he turned to writing. It was the Boer War that made his fortune and left him free to follow his inclinations. At that time he purchased the foreign rights to manufacture and sell a soldier's patented equipment for the carrying of ammunition, and set sail for England with a large quantity of machinery and with skilled labor. He obtained the adoption of the equipment by the War Office, and supplied the whole British army during the South African war. In six months after his arrival he had built factories in Great Britain, France and Germany, and established branch offices throughout Europe.

Richard Washburn Child, the American Ambassador to Italy, whose new novel, "The Hands of Nara," was published recently by the Duttons, has been more fortunate in his search for an abiding place than sometimes happens to the diplomatic representatives of the United States in Europe. His home is the Orsini palace, which one reaches by a driveway through tall sycamore trees and then by an imposing marble stairway of seventy-three steps to the summit of Mount Savello, where stands the palace that was built in 1526 for the Savelli, and that now, nearly four centuries later, houses the American Embassy. Two hundred years ago it became the property of the princely house of Orsini, whose name it still bears, although it belongs now to their great enemies and rivals, the princely house of Colonna. It surrounds the ruins of the Theater of Marcellus, begun by Julius Caesar and completed by Augustus, which was one of the architectural glories of Imperial Rome.